

QCI approves first training institution under Traditional healer certification scheme

In a first worldwide, the **Quality Council of India**, India's apex quality promotion body, has approved a training institution under its **Voluntary Certification Scheme for Traditional Community Healthcare Providers**, the official name given to traditional healers. The Institute of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology, a Bangalore based organization specializing in local health practices has earned the distinction based on an onsite assessment by QCI and the approval is valid for a period of 3 years from January 18, 2018.

This follows the launch of the national scheme in Mar 2017 which provides for both certification of traditional healers by independent third party certifiers and registration of training organizations for upgrading skills of traditional healers to meet the competence standard set under the Scheme.

It is now being widely accepted that several basic needs of primary healthcare are being managed by the Traditional Community Healthcare Providers (TCHPs) estimated to be one million in number in India. They are the repositories of centuries of wisdom and knowledge of health practices, transmitted through an incredibly effective system of oral transmission inherited through family lineage, acquired under the Guru Shishya Parampara or through observation and experience by way of assisting the knowledgeable elders. The TCHPs are the repository of diverse community and region specific ecosystems, knowledge, skill and experience. It would indeed be a civilizational loss to lose this rich knowledge heritage for the lack of a systematic and standardised system for recognising their knowledge and skills.

It was with this objective that QCI, in partnership with the **Foundation for Revitalization of Local Health Traditions (FRLHT)**, a Bangalore based NGO specialising in local health practices, launched what is its most offbeat work and a pioneering initiative worldwide, the Voluntary Certification Scheme for Traditional Community Healthcare Providers (VCSTCHP) in March 2017 at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala with the simultaneous flagging off of the **Lok Swasthya Parampara Yatra** from Kanyakumari, Tamilnadu for bringing about widespread awareness amongst the TCHPs, their associations and various stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental. Thus the Scheme is aimed at recognising the knowledge and skills of thousands of folk healers (as they are generally known) to get empowered for providing quality service to the citizens of the country, more so the remote rural and tribal population. Since the launch of the Scheme there been active participation from the traditional knowledge holders and organisations working for the healthcare sector.

The Scheme was designed broadly following the International norms as per ISO 17024 for Personnel Certification and the framework for the Third Party Certification for the competency of the TCHPs. In parallel, QCI also created a framework for accreditation of training providers recognizing that even though the certification is based on prior knowledge of traditional healthcare practices, the healers may also need some training in respect of emerging, contemporary issues of public health in order to prepare them for certification. The organizations working in the field of traditional community healthcare practices across the country were invited to explain the process of certification as per the Scheme requirements for getting certified either as Personnel Certification Body or Training Institutes and there has been an overwhelming response.

It is expected that the certification system would facilitate the induction of folk healers into the national healthcare delivery system especially in remote tribal and rural areas. QCI has written to the Ministries of AYUSH, Environment & Forests which promotes traditional knowledge through the Biodiversity Act, and Health & Family Welfare, which manages the **National Health Mission** to recognize the healers certified under the system and incentivize their certification. **Chhattisgarh** state government has already committed support and funds to promote the Scheme and QCI has also finalized an MoU with the **North Eastern Institute of Folk Medicine** under the Ministry of AYUSH in Arunachal Pradesh to certify 200 folk healers in the north east under the Scheme.